

No rest for border patrols

ASSAIL Two's crew embarked in HMAS *Maitland* continued its hard work over the reduced activity period keeping a close eye on oil and gas platforms during patrols in the North West Shelf Venture.

One of the Navy's 14 Armidale-class patrol boats, *Maitland* was in the far north west waters of Australia on Christmas Eve to conduct an augmented security patrol of various offshore oil and gas platforms in the area.

Under the command of LCDR Gemma Mountney, Assail Two was assigned to Joint Task Force 639, the military component of Australia's whole-of-government maritime border security operation, Operation Resolute.

Maitland and Assail Two were tasked with keeping a 24-hour vigil while the rest of the country celebrated the festive season.

LCDR Mountney said despite the busy schedule there was still plenty of time for Christmas cheer aboard.

"It was a good feeling to be in the area in the lead up to Christmas with plenty of information sharing and some friendly banter between the crew and the oil and gas platforms" she said.

"We celebrated the fol-

lowing day with a traditional Christmas lunch, a Secret Santa and we even had an unexpected visit from Santa Claus, though strangely I couldn't find my leading coxswain at the time," she added.

Patrols of the North West Shelf area play a key role in Navy's effort to augment the security of the oil and gas platforms which is of vital strategic and economic importance to Australia as a maritime nation.

"The patrol has been successful in terms of testing communications, procedures and protocols between Defence and Customs and Border Protection assets, as well as the privately operated oil and gas installations," LCDR Mountney said.

Navy conducts patrols as part of Operation Resolute, in addition to responding to a range of maritime security threats including prohibited imports and exports, illegal fishing, pollution, piracy, maritime terrorism, quarantine risks and irregular maritime arrivals.

The operation covers an area roughly 10 per cent of the world's surface and includes Australia's exclusive economic zone which extends up to 200nm around the mainland and offshore territories.



ON THE ALERT: HMAS *Maitland* with Assail Two embarked patrols the Australian North West Shelf.

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Consultation on hammerhead crane

PUBLIC consultation on the proposed removal of the Hammerhead Crane at Fleet Base East, Garden Island, Sydney, is open until February 18.

The proposal to remove the crane is being assessed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

While not heritage listed, the crane is known to have Commonwealth Heritage values and is located outside the Commonwealth Heritage Listed Garden Island precinct.

The crane has not been used since 1996 and presents a range of ongoing costs, risks to workplace health and safety for Defence personnel and contractors, and limitations on ship berthing options.

Workplace health and safety hazards associated with the deterioration of the crane have required the permanent placement of scaffolding to capture any objects that fall from it.

Maintenance of the Hammerhead Crane costs Defence about \$770,000 a year.

The 2009 Defence White Paper established the importance of enhanced amphibious capabilities, delivered by acquiring two new Landing Helicopter

Dock (LHD) ships, the first in late 2013.

The presence of the crane on the wharf where the LHDs will be berthed will restrict the Navy's berthing capacity and flexibility at Fleet Base East.

The proposal to remove the crane can be downloaded from www.gml.com.au/hammerhead-crane-public-consultation or viewed at the following locations:

- ▶ Customs House Library, 31 Alfred Street, Circular Quay, NSW
- ▶ The State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW
- ▶ The library of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities at John Gorton Building, King Edward Terrace, Parkes, ACT.

Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd has been engaged by Defence to conduct the public consultation process and written comments can be submitted at www.gml.com.au/hammerhead-crane-public-consultation or by email to hammerheadcrane@gml.com.au or post Hammerhead Crane Removal Project, c/- Godden Mackay Logan, 78 George Street, Redfern, NSW, 2016.



TIGHT FIT: A computer-generated image of an LHD berthed at Garden Island near the Hammerhead Crane